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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 23, 2005

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**LEADER OF MERCED GANGSTER CRIP CRACK DISTRIBUTION
ORGANIZATION SENTENCED TO 200 MONTHS IN FEDERAL PRISON**

FRESNO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that RAYMOND SLATON, 33, of Merced, California, leader of the Merced Gangster Crip crack cocaine distribution organization, was sentenced late yesterday by United States District Judge Oliver W. Wanger to 200 months in federal prison. The defendant pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute cocaine base before Judge Wanger on August 29, 2005, and admitted that the conspiracy involved between 500 grams and 1.5 kilograms of crack cocaine.

This case was the product of an extensive/joint investigation by the Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement, Drug Enforcement Administration, Merced Police Department, Merced County Sheriff's Department, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives, and the Merced County District Attorney's Office.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Duce Rice, who prosecuted the case, Judge Wanger, in sentencing the defendant, said "It's important to send a message that providing drugs to criminal street gang members to sell cannot be tolerated by a civilized society."

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